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Joint Base San Antonio moves closer toward implementation

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Representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and participating branches of the service met to finalize the way ahead for Randolph, Lackland and Fort Sam Houston during a joint basing workshop hosted by Air Education and Training Command June 9-11.

The memorandum of agreement review workshop focused on detailing exactly how the soon-to-be established 502nd Air Base Wing and its three mission support groups will provide installation support in the San Antonio area. The joint basing MOA lists services the 502nd ABW will provide as well as the people and funding allocated for that support.

During the workshop, joint basing representatives and military leaders pored through each detail of the MOA, solving problems and reaching agreements. The San Antonio MOA workshop was one of 12 similar workshops conducted at other joint base locations across the Unites States.

"I'm very pleased. It's very encouraging to come to a workshop, our 11th, to see how the Army and the Air Force come together very well in a team effort," said Air Force Col. Kenny Weldon, Office of the Secretary of Defense joint basing program manager. "We had some issues to work through but we were able to do that. It was very successful."

Air Force Col. Vincent Feck, Joint Basing Implementation Office director at Randolph, guided efforts to synchronize and integrate all the functional representatives during the workshop.

"We had very strong agreement locally on the MOA," said Feck. "OSD and service representatives added some standardization to our MOA from other joint bases and they brought to the table other issues that maybe we had not thought of. It was a total team effort."

Under the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Joint Basing plan for San Antonio, approximately 49 installation functions at Fort Sam Houston will combine with those at Randolph and Lackland to support what will be the largest customer-based organization in the Department of Defense when completed in 2011.

Fort Sam Houston's mission remains the same.

"When we think of the history at Fort Sam Houston and all that it has contributed to the history of our nation, it's pretty amazing," said Air Force Gen. Stephen Lorenz, AETC commander.

"What happens with the implementation of joint basing at Fort Sam should be totally transparent. We're in this together as a team."

Col. Mary Garr, Fort Sam Houston Garrison commander, was an integral player during the workshop.

"Everybody came in with a focus that we were one military, one team - not representing a specific service," Garr said. "We focused on what is the right thing to do for Joint Base San Antonio. Obviously we needed to work the service- specific component issues and those are being worked appropriately."

Garr added that the joint basing team still has a lot of work ahead, but the progress toward laying the foundation for success is impressive.

"I think the hard work of the AETC staff, the staff of all three of the bases paid off," said Dr. Cem Maxwell, San Antonio Joint Program Office deputy director, who is responsible for integrating the 2005 BRAC program in San Antonio. "It's been a couple years or more of preparations to get to this point. It's not the end, but it's a major milestone that I think we did extremely well with."

Air Force officials announced in May that Air Force Brig. Gen. Leonard Patrick will command the 502nd ABW after serving as 37th Training Wing commander at Lackland.

"There were times when there were disagreements, but we were able to adjust and think about what's best for the service members who will live and work at Joint Base San Antonio," Patrick said. "We know there are some things we will have to work out during execution, but that's the beauty about this conference. We got the right people in the room, at the right time, with the right level of cooperation to do what's right for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines and the DoD civilians who will work at the Joint Base."